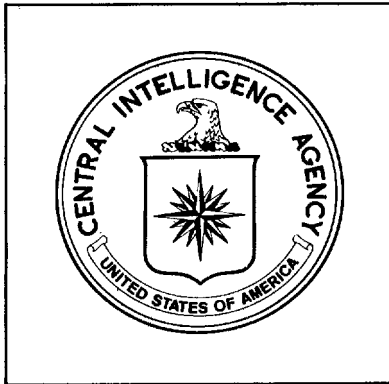


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STAFF NOTES

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SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE

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Year-End Smiles for Austrian-Yugoslav Relations

Austrian Chancellor Kreisky and Yugoslav President Tito attempted to put the best face on bilateral relations during Kreisky's unofficial visit to Yugoslavia on December 28-29.

Relations between the two countries reached a low point last spring, when Belgrade accused Vienna of discrimination against the Slovene minority in the Austrian state of Carinthia. At issue were unimplemented points in the language of local minorities in parts of Austria. Vienna, in reaction, temporarily withdrew its ambassador from Belgrade. Both sides have since made efforts to patch over their differences, and tensions appeared to ease following talks between Chancellor Kreisky and Tito in Helsinki in July.

While in Yugoslavia, Kreisky discussed the minority issue primarily with Tito's close adviser, Edward Kardelj; with Tito, the discussions were of broader international issues. Kreisky said that the Yugoslav side had taken a "very tactful attitude" on the minority problem and stressed that the Yugoslavs had not "made proposals" concerning Austrian policy. Tito said that the Kreisky visit itself showed that bilateral relations had improved in the past few months and that "we are on the best way to better understand the mutual difficulties."

Despite these soothing words, controversial issues remain, and Belgrade will continue to monitor Vienna's treatment of its Slovenian minority. Austria's Socialist government has procrastinated in addressing the unpopular road-sign issue, but with the recent elections under its belt Vienna may feel free to take some action in the coming year.

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Vienna has linked a solution to a "special minority census," which the government probably hopes to use as a rationale for putting up bilingual road signs in Carinthia only in areas having a significant Slovenian population. The Yugoslavs do not go along with the census plan and insist that bilingual road-signs be used throughout the state.

Any solution will more than likely offend some Slavic- and German-speaking Austrians. An Austrian study commission suggested last spring that one way to resolve the dispute is to submit the problem to the UN for a decision.



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Romania Steps Up Anti-RFE Campaign

The US embassy in Bucharest reports that Romania's intensified campaign against Radio Free Europe also contains veiled potshots at the Soviets.

The embassy sees the campaign as part of a wider Romanian effort to counteract domestic hopes that the European security talks will lead to freer movement of peoples and ideas. The drive may also be intended to develop a more credible propaganda response to Western criticism of Romania's selective implementation of the humanitarian commitments endorsed at the Helsinki summit.

The campaign reflects Ceausescu's apparent increased sensitivity to criticism from any quarter--domestic or foreign. He faces continuing economic headaches, accentuated by last summer's disastrous floods; a population that has a healthy skepticism of calls for further belt-tightening; and problems with his CEMA partners.

Romanian media are also amplifying Ceausescu's speech of December 3, when he equated emigration with treason. The drive is, in fact, heavily laced with a higher-than-usual patriotic pitch that implies criticism of the Soviets. Regime propagandists, for example, now are castigating "critics" (read Soviet) who had said that Romanians should "raise animals and tend pastures, leaving industry to others."

Bucharest's explicit criticism of the West and implicit criticism of the Soviets suggest that Ceausescu is trying to pose as an independent-minded adherent to the Helsinki principles. The

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embassy suggests--and we agree--that contrary to the expectations of the regime, the direct attacks on Radio Free Europe may increase the number of its listeners and strengthen its credibility, particularly among those segments of the population which are dubious about official declarations and policies.



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Albania Maintains Tough Line

During the past month, Albanian politics have featured increasing stress on ideological purity, close ties with China, and party chief Enver Hoxha's purge of "bureaucrats," which has apparently removed those individuals who have been arguing for a more pragmatic and economic policy.

The party paper, *Zeri I Popullit*, has recently printed several articles dealing with the publication of the 19th volume of the works of Enver Hoxha. Predictably all of the articles condemned the familiar demon of Soviet revisionism. No details have surfaced in these articles regarding the recent purges of high officials in Tirana, but it seems clear that the present leadership is united behind Hoxha in his determination to block any change in Albania's hard-line stance in the Communist world.

As part of their efforts to demonstrate Tirana's unchanging line, Hoxha and other leading Albanian officials have lately held receptions to honor visiting Cambodian Prince Sihanouk. They also offered their condolences at the Chinese embassy on the occasion of Kang Sheng's death. Not only were there educational and cultural exchanges between China and Albania, but an Albanian military delegation has just completed a nearly month-long visit to China. No formal communique was issued on the results of the military delegation's visit, but it was well publicized in the Albanian press.



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